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ROLLUPS
From President Lisa Chiappetta

Wow! What a great spring meeting we had in Madison. We had a wonderful turnout, and a great speaker, Carlos Kaslow ("the storage attorney"). Carlos gave useful information on all different legal aspects for storage. We will be having our Fall Conference and Trade Show in Wisconsin Dells on October 9th. Mark your calendars now. You don’t want to miss it.

The WSSA board members have come up with a few ideas to reform our lien law. These improvements will better protect the storage owners and consumers. We will be sending everyone a copy of the draft. We ask that you pass it along to your state representative and senator. It is very important that we get as much support as possible from the senators and representatives to help get the lien reform passed.

Now that spring is here, have you given your storage facility a spring makeover? Are all of your key pads and buildings painted with no rust? Is the fence falling down or broken from all the snow? Is the yard picked up and are the aisles swept? Now is planting season. Add some extra beauty to your facility by planting flowers. The best way to check out your facility is to pretend that you are a customer. Pull in your lot. What is the first impression you get? Walk around your facility and see what they see. Sometimes it’s great to have someone else do it. They may see things that you don’t notice. Remember the appearance of your facility is a reflection of how you do business. A customer may choose not to rent from you, but to rent from your competition because of the way your facility looks. Same idea with having a dumpster for the customers. Is there a way that you can have it enclosed so it’s not an eye sore? Stick it in a storage unit, and the garbage man can pull it out.

WSSA BOARD ANNOUNCES CHANGES TO THE LIEN LAW

1. Why are we changing the lien law?
We are reforming the lien law because it was enacted in the 1980’s. Since then, many things have changed, and we can make improvements to the lien law. This will help the owners and the customers.

   1. One important change is an option on publishing the lien sale. Some newspapers are going out of business and there is no place to publish an ad for the lien sale.
   2. Another change is adding an option of how to send out the 2nd letter. Some customers will receive the letter if it is sent out first class instead of certified mail.
3. The most important change is the paragraph 12 sub (B) . . . Where anyone affected by the sale of unit may sue the owners. (Like public storages lawsuits)
4. We are adding a definition for commercially reasonable sale.

2. If I have a lien sale, what will be different?
If you have a lien sale, the changes will be:

1. You have an option on how to mail the second letter.
2. Where you publish the legal notice. I would recommend the newspaper for now. You would not have to publish the unit number of the storage unit. This could be dangerous for potential break-ins.

3. How can I be sure my sale is commercially reasonable?
To make your sale “commercially reasonable,” promote it as best you can. The more you promote it through advertising and signs, flags, whatever, the more “reasonable” it will become. If you have a specialty item such as a piano, call dealers and invite them to bid. The new law will require 3 bidders at the sale. Use the Fox 6 news web site to promote your sale as well. The ad is free and provides maps and directions. Maintain a list of buyers who come to your sales and send them flyers or emails about an upcoming sale.

4. What kinds of promotions do you do to get buyers to your lien sales?
It is a must to advertise the legal notice of the sale, but this should not be what you rely on for promoting the sale. There should be ways that you promote the sale to get customers to come to the sale. Some things that you can do:

1. Publish the sale Friday and Saturday (the two days before your sale) in the garage sale section of the newspaper. This only costs a few dollars. This is the section that people look in for sales. I think it’s the best place to promote your sale.
2. Put a sign out in front of your property announcing the time and date of your sale with flags.
3. Hang posters in the office and on your doors.
4. Hang a poster on your key pads.
5. Send out postcards or flyers to your bidders. (You should have a bidder’s list with names and addresses from everyone who comes to your sales. Provide a sign-in sheet and ask them if they want to be on your mailing list for sales.
6. Stop at flea markets and ask the sellers if they would like to be on your mailing list or drop off flyers for your sales.

WSSA HOLDS ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL MEETING

105 people attended the WSSA business meeting held at the Radisson Hotel in Madison on May 1. This was a nuts and bolts session on the Lien Law. Everyone appeared to come away from the meeting with new information and more confidence on how to handle a Lien sale. Carlos Kaslow was the highlighted main speaker. Carlos drafted the leased provided by WSSA which is available for sale at the WSSA headquarters. The entire outline on Carlos’ talk is available in the member’s only section of the WSSA web site.

Here are some of the important highlights of the seminar:

1. The rental agreement must be in writing with bold type explaining that tenant’s property is subject to a lien. There has to be space for an alternate party to be notified in case of a lien sale although the tenant does not have to fill in this information.
2. Remember you can charge $20 or 20% of the rent for a late fee, whichever is higher.
3. Be sure to verify tenant’s last known address when sending out the notices.
4. Do not allow a non-tenant to store their things without being on the lease.
5. Bankruptcy is a federal, not a state matter. DO NOT sell the tenant’s goods. Make a deal with them to vacate the unit.
6. If you store outdoor vehicles, have a separate addendum in your lease. Have assigned marked spaces to validate the lease. Get a copy of the registration. Make sure the vehicle is in operating condition.
7. Make sure that tenants are aware in climate control spaces that “temperature can vary”. 

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THOUGHTS FROM THE WSSA SEMINAR
By Tricia Olson, Investment Real Estate Specialists

If you weren't at the WSSA convention in Madison on May 1, well, excuse me for saying so, but you missed a LOT! The turnout was very impressive and a wealth of information was presented as well as shared. While there I had an opportunity to catch up with a few members and get their take on the conference.
Barb and Mike Hoerth own Hoerth Storage and sat next to me during Carlos Kaslow's presentation (who was, by the way, very engaging, informative and funny). They've been in the business a long time but according to Barb, they still learned something new to take back to the office with them. The list she presented me with included learning solutions to low value property sales, that e-mail is considered valid communication, bankruptcy-Chapter 11- what should I do? What can I expect? and removing who has access from the rental contract. Barb says, "Attending the WSSA meetings remind me of what I need to do as an owner/operator to operate legally".

Moving on I met Rich and Andy Giesler from Fox Valley Mini Storage in Green Bay. They are currently non-members but I'm thinking that may change. They have been in the industry for 10 years and own about 200 units. They learned they also need to mail lien notices to the alternate listed on their renter’s contract.

Newer owners Deb and Tony Vrana of Vrana Mini Storage in Tomah were also there. They've been in the business approximately 3-4 years and have been WSSA members for about 2 years now, but this is the first meeting they ever attended. They've been using their own lease all this time, constantly revamping it, currently on their third attempt. According to both Deb and Tony they were, "Learning a LOT!" Too much to break it down.

I know I learned a lot to take back to the office. So much so that my fellow co-workers teased me about how often my hand was raised with questions. Well, how am I going to know if I don't ask? That's the beauty of these conventions. Time changes things; laws, management possibilities, marketing capabilities, and so on. It's a wonderful opportunity to stay current with everything out there that's available to us as an industry. I know that, despite years in the business, I am still learning. I think we all are.
In early May, Chris Hitler of ARGUS / Investment Real Estate Specialists conducted a state wide survey of storage owners to get a pulse on the industry’s current performance and Owners’ perspective on the future of their business. Key highlights included:

- Over 120 Owner’s responded to the survey
- Size of facilities ranged from 21 to over 2,000 units
- Survey participants came from across the state – largest single metro area only represented 12% of total respondents
- What he found:
  - The vast majority of owners are doing as good if not better than last year
  - Two-thirds of facilities are operating at 90% or better occupancy
  - A sizeable minority are looking to add additional units to their facility in the next two years
  - Very few owners will be selling their facility in the next three years
  - Rental rates are highest in the suburbs of Milwaukee
  - Climate control storage continues to be a niche product

If you are interested in taking the survey and getting a copy of the full report, please contact chris.hitler@ires-llc.net.

IMPROVE YOUR ATTENDANCE AT LIEN SALES

For those self storage owners/operators that sometimes find it difficult to get enough bidders at their auctions, you may want to try posting it on www.fox6now.com. The posting is very easy to do and will list the time, date, location, and driving directions for your auction. Hopefully this will help you get more bidders and more bidders mean more money. From the home page, go to Extras, then Rummage Tracker. Two thirds down the page on the right side is the tab for posting an auction or http://www.fox6now.com/community/rummagetracker/submitsale/.

NEW INFORMATION ON SELLING A VEHICLE

By: Cynthia Jackson, Research and Information, Division of Motor Vehicles

An individual who purchases a vehicle by means of a self-service storage operator's lien, where the electronic odometer reading cannot be viewed, would be able to get a title, provided every thing is in compliance, that would list the odometer reading as "not actual." Once they receive the title and get keys made for the vehicle, they can submit for an odometer correction to "actual" provided that you or the new owner has no knowledge of any discrepancy that may exist with the reading. If the Department of Transportation is aware of any odometer discrepancy the title will remain "not actual" or display the correct faulty status of the odometer.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Annual Fall Conference and Tradeshow
October 9, 2009
Kalahari Resort and Waterpark, Wisconsin Dells, WI

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